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SUBJECT: INCOMING AUSTRIAN UN PERMREP ON PLANS FOR A
SECURITY COUNCIL SEAT, IRAN, AND KOSOVO

¶1. (C) Summary: Incoming Austrian PermRep Mayr-Harting made his case to Ambassador Wolff for Austria to win one of the Security Council seats up for vote October 17. Mayr-Harting's arguments ranged from Austria's recent successful EU Presidency to being perceived as "harmless" by the international community. Mayr-Harting cited Austria's need for energy diversification while extolling Austria's "loyal execution" of EU Iran sanctions despite the high cost. On UNMIK, Wolff urged caution on Russian and Serbian efforts to re-start Security Council engagement. Mayr-Harting said he will return with Foreign Minister Ursula Plassnik for the October 17 vote and expects to take up his PermRep position December 2. End Summary.

Optimistic about winning a seat...

¶2. (C) In a October 2 meeting with Ambassador Wolff incoming Austrian PermRep Thomas Mayr-Harting predicted that Austria would secure one of the two European seats on the Security Council in the vote set for October 17, and expressed his interest in working closely with the US. He said that if Austria does win the seat it would loyally represent EU positions and went on to describe consultations with outgoing Council member Belgium on the mechanism for EU input into the Council. Wolff noted that a mechanism for cooperation among Western countries also exists, emphasizing the important role non-permanent EU members play in negotiating Security Council compromises.

...and viewed as "harmless"

¶3. (C) Mayr-Harting said his experience campaigning for the Security Council seat convinced him that Austria has no enemies, and that broad popularity is one of Austria's strengths. He also noted that Austria is viewed as "harmless," yet maintains a strong record on promoting international rule of law and serving as a solid citizen of the international community. Mayr-Harting went on to describe Austria's strong cooperation with the US during its EU presidency, and said the Austrians proved they could implement tough decisions. He noted that when in a position of responsibility, Austria always maintains good transatlantic relationships. He raised Austria's role as chair of the Iraqi sanctions committee in the 1990s as an example.

Relations with Iran: energy diversification required

¶4. (C) In response to questions on Austria's potential positions on Iran sanctions if they do win the Council seat, Mayr-Harting said that the "traumatic" 2006 energy crisis

taught Austria that it must work seriously on energy diversification. Mayr-Harting hinted that the US could ease Austria's energy situation by helping talks with Turkmenistan progress and by helping Austria gain access to Iraqi gas. Mayr-Harting expressed gratitude for the US role in promoting the Nabucco pipeline, saying that the US had been more useful than Austria's EU partners. He explained that future Iranian involvement with Nabucco could not be discounted and although Austrians were "not trying to be difficult," they could not accept closing options off, given their need for energy diversification.

¶ 15. (C) Mayr-Harting added that Austria had paid a higher price than any other country by cutting off ties with Iranian banks, yet had "executed loyally" EU sanctions. Wolff responded by noting that the two-track approach of sanctions and incentives had been designed to achieve a breakthrough and find a solution as soon as possible. He emphasized that national economic concerns pale compared to the threat posed by a nuclear Iran.

Austria's foreign policy to remain unchanged

¶ 16. (C) Queried on Austria's recent election, Mayr-Harting responded he does not expect any shift in foreign policy following the gains of the far-right Freedom Party and Alliance for the Future of Austria Party. The shift in Christian Democrat leadership clearly signals an intent to continue the existing coalition, Mayr-Harting explained, and that even after the far-right 2000 election win, Austria's foreign policy remained steady. Shrugging off the

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significance of the far-right capturing 29 percent of the vote, Mayr-Harting said the turnout revealed the public's frustration with the governing coalition rather than an endorsement of far-right views. Mayr-Harting surmised that the Christian Democrats, by forming a new coalition with the Social Democrats, have signaled plans to stay the course, and that Foreign Minister Ursula Plassnik will likely keep her position if she so chooses.

Serbian and Russian Maneuverings on Kosovo not helpful

¶ 17. (C) Mayr-Harting said that he had learned from Russian PermRep Churkin that the UN Secretariat and the Serbian delegation had discussed a new variation of reconfiguration for the UN Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). Wolff confirmed he had heard similar reports, but noted they may be exaggerated. As the Secretariat staff had failed to inform the Kosovars about their meetings with the Serbs, the discussions would be considered inappropriate. The Serbian delegation had also requested postponement of the scheduled Secretariat meeting on Kosovo, Wolff said, and had sought to insert itself on a range of Kosovo matters. Wolff noted that the underlying motivation of Russian and Serbian efforts is to have the Security Council re-engage, which would likely lead to further stalling on European Union Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) deployment and other activities. A council blessing for what the Russians have in mind, Wolff warned, would not make things easier for the EU. Wolff told Mayr-Harting not to expect a presidential statement following the upcoming secretariat briefing on UNMIK.

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